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ABSTRACT

Numerous easily accessible databases cover almost every subject area in the humanities. The principal database resources in the humanities are described. There are two major database vendors for humanities information: BRS (Bibliographic Retrieval Services) and DIALOG Information Services, Inc. As an introduction to online searching, this article focuses on DIALOG. By searching several databases, a wealth of information can be retrieved. The following databases available through DIALOG are described, with their DIALOG file numbers: (1) America History and Life; (2) Architecture Database; (3) Art Literature International; (4) Artbibliographies Modern; (5) Arts and Humanities Research; (6) Avery Architecture Index; (7) ERIC; (8) Historical Abstracts; (9) Linguistics and Language Behavior Abstracts; (10) Music Literature International; (11) Philosopher's Index; and (12) Religion Index. These files span a wide range of disciplines. Awareness of what they contain will help the researcher in the humanities decide when an online search will provide more flexibility in researching a given topic. (Contains 10 references.) (SLD)

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ONLINE BIBLIOGRAPHIC SEARCHING IN THE HUMANITIES DATABASES: AN INTRODUCTION

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ONLINE BIBLIOGRAPHIC SEARCHING IN THE HUMANITIES DATABASES: AN INTRODUCTION

Scholars beginning research on a topic in the humanities will most likely start with a thorough examination of the relevant literature. This task can be done manually by searching all available indexes, or it can be done mechanically by using databases that are available online. Of the two methods, the online search is not only generally more efficient in terms of time saving, but in many cases it includes more current materials, as updates are available online sooner than they are in print. Numerous easily accessible databases cover almost every conceivable subject area. This article surveys the principal such bibliographic resources in the humanities.

Often an online search can be structured so as to retrieve information not easily found in a manual search. In some instances, the online database is, in fact, the only tool available to the researcher. It is correspondingly important for the researcher to understand, not only the importance of the resource but also how the information retrieval process works.

ONLINE DATABASES:

Today, computerized information services are widely available. Most academic institutions as well as public libraries offer these services to their patrons. However, a review of the literature, and brief review of local online usage for humanities research indicate low use of this

rewarding resource.

Why is this valuable research tool not being used as heavily as one might expect? Is it merely a reservation that humanists have towards online information retrieval? Of even greater concern is the possiblity that the merits of online retrieval and the availability of various databases in the humanities have not been communicated in a meaningful and practical manner to this group of researchers.

DATABASE VENDORS:

There are two major database vendors for humanities information : Bibliographic Retrieval Services (BRS) based in New York, and DIALOG Information Services, Inc., based in California. The larger of the two DIALOG currently has over 350 databases. Some files are available on both systems. For the purposes of this article, I concentrate on files applicable to DIALOG.

SEARCHING AN ONLINE SYSTEM:

Indeed, some researchers may feel that, because they have managed all these years without online databases, there is no need to bother with it now. That view, fortunately, has not been applied to the microwave oven, the word processor or countless other innovations presently enhancing our lives. Certainly, we can live without them, but isn't it a help having them? That attitude is exactly the mindset with which one should approach online searching. The

discussion here is not a manual versus online searching debate nor is it intended to promote the use of one method over the other. The best research method enhances the manual with the online search and vice versa, as time constraints and the nature of the topic dictate.

ADVANTAGES:

As mentioned earlier, an online search has some advantages over a manual search.It allows, for example, a more comprehensive search more efficiently and quickly. An even greater advantage is the flexibility possible in online searching by combining certain concepts and/or terms, resulting in more focussed retrieval. It is possible, also, to run an interdisciplinary search in several databases at one time. One may, for example, search art, music, psychology, and literary journals for the same topic. The obvious question then is this: if online searching is really so great, why isn't everybody using it?

RELUCTANCE OF USER:

One major reason for the omission is the cost involved. Although, not prohibitive, it certainly is one more obstacle to the searcher. A researcher may feel that, by contrast, a manual search is "free", a questionable judgement. Another possible reason for hesitation in undertaking an online search is the need to use an intermediary. An experienced online searcher, familiar with the system's protocol and unique features of each file can carry out the search far more efficiently and productively. The researcher

understanding what is involved in an online search is far more likely to request an online search.

AVAILABILITY OF DATABASES:

Many bibliographic databases that are available focus on the humanities and cover various time periods and publications. If the researcher seeks only minimal information, it would only be necessary to search one of these databases. However, by searching several databases, a wealth of useful, related information can be retrieved.

The following section briefly describes selected databases, including the subjects covered and the years for which the information is available.

AMERICA HISTORY AND LIFE. (DIALOG File 38)

Inclusive Dates: 1964 to the present.

This database corresponds to the printed America: History and Life. A comprehensive file, it abstracts and indexes over 2,000 journals in the sciences and humanities. Major coverage is provided for U.S. and Canadian history and for current affairs. It also includes American and ethnic studies, folklore, popular culture, and related areas.

ARCHITECTURE DATABASE (DIALOG FILE 179)

Inclusive Dates: 1978 to the present.

The Architecture database indexes over 400 periodicals from more than 45 different countries. It is the online catalog of the British Architectural Library, Royal Institute of British Architects. Corresponding to the

printed Architectural Periodicals Index and the Architectural Books Catalogue and covers all aspects of this field.

ART LITERATURE INTERNATIONAL (DIALOG FILE 191)

Inclusive Dates: 1973 to the present.

This file corresponds to the printed source of the same name and abstracts and indexes current publications on all aspects of Western Art and includes among other topics the history of art, sculpture, painting, drawing art theory and criticism, artists, movements and schools, spanning the time period from the 4th century to the present.

ARTBIBLIOGRAPHIES MODERN (DIALOG FILE 56)

Inclusive Dates: 1974 to the present

This resource corresponds to the printed index of the same title. It provides comprehensive bibliographic coverage of current literature in art, architecture, design, drawing, photography, textiles, and related fields. All aspects of 19th and 20th century art and design are covered.

ARTS AND HUMANITIES SEARCH (DIALOG FILE 439)

Inclusive Dates: 1980 to the present.

This database corresponds to the print source Arts and Humanities Citation Index. An international, multidisciplinary database fully indexing 1,300 of the world's journals in arts and humanities, it more selectively indexes 5,000 others of related interest. The subject

coverage ranges from art and architecture to literature, philosophy, religion, television and theatre. This file offers a variety of options for online searching particularly unique is the availability of citation searching.

AVERY ARCHITECTURE INDEX (DIALOG FILE 178)

Inclusive Dates: 1979 to the present

Produced at the Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library of Columbia University, this index covers all aspects of architecture history, education, and management, and includes building design, materials, and all building types, and city and regional planning, urban history, and other related areas.

ERIC (DIALOG FILE 1)

Inclusive dates RIE 1966-present

CIJE 1969-present

ERIC is the database of educational materials collected by the Educational Resources Information Center of the U.S. Department of Education. ERIC consists of two subfiles: 1. (RIE)Resources in Education and 2.(CIJE)Current Index to Journals in Education. The RIE subfile includes records of many different types of documents, reports, proceedings, reviews, dissertations, and other materials. The CIJE subfile includes records of journal articles from education oriented journals and education related articles from other journals. This file covers a wide range of subject areas

related to education from Elementary and Early Childhood Education to Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, Teacher Education, Tests, Measurement, and Evaluation.

HISTORICAL ABSTRACTS (DIALOG FILE 39)

Inclusive Dates: 1973 to the present.

This resource abstracts and indexes international journal literature in history and related social sciences and humanities. It covers the history of the world from 1450 to the present and corresponds to the printed Historical Abstracts.

LINGUISTICS AND LANGUAGE BEHAVIOR ABSTRACTS (DIALOG FILE 36)

Inclusive Dates: 1973 to the present.

Abstracting and indexing source for articles from 1,000 international journals in linguistics and language behavior. Subjects include among others, anthropological linguistics, descriptive and applied linguistics, interpersonal behavior and communication, poetics, stylistics and psycholinguistics.

MUSIC LITERATURE INTERNATIONAL(RILM) (DIALOG FILE 97)

Inclusive Dates: 1971-1979

This international database corresponds to the printed work entitled Repertoire International de Litterature Musicale contains abstracts of all significant literature in music selected from over 300 journals. It covers historical musicology, ethnomusicology, instruments and voice, and interdisciplinary studies in music and other aspects of music education.

PHILOSOPHER'S INDEX (DIALOG FILE 57)

Inclusive Dates: 1940 to the present.

This online index corresponds to the printed source of the same name. It indexes and abstracts over 270 journals of philosophy and related fields covering aesthetics, ethics, logic, metaphysics, political, and social philosophy.

RELIGION INDEX (DIALOG FILE 190)

Inclusive Dates: varies for the different indexes included.

This is the online version of the following titles available in print: Religon Index One: Periodicals, Religion Index Two: Multi-Author Works, and Research in Ministry. This work covers all known religions, theological systems, biblical studies, and related areas.

The files described above span a wide range of disciplines: art, architecture, religion, philosophy, languages, literatures, cultures, music and all of their related disciplines and sub-disciplines. These summary descriptions are based on the Database Catalog and the DIALOG file documentation sheets. More information on each database is available in the database sheets which include search examples, retrieval formats, prefixes and suffixes unique to each file. Cost information for each file and format is available in the monthly price list, as well as online.

SUMMARY:

Awareness of what bibliographical sources are available in the humanities and what an online search involves will certainly help the humanist researcher decide when an online search will be more appropriate. Not intended to fully replace manual searching, online searching does provide more flexibility in researching a given topic. When planning your next literature exploration, consider going online and into new avenues of research!

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